

# **SOCIALIST STUDIES**

**No. 48 Summer 2003**

**WAR! THE LOGISTICS OF INSANITY**

**NO INDEPENDENCE**

**THE FORCES OF CONSERVATISM**

**THE LEFT - TRYING TO PUT CAPITALISM RIGHT!**

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**LETTERS**

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
THE SOCIALIST PARTY  
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Communications to: General Secretary,  
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB  
e-mail: [enquiries@spgb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@spgb.org.uk)  
website: [www.spgb.org.uk](http://www.spgb.org.uk)

## **SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU! AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!**

### **The Problem**

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who accept and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

### **The Solution**

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the class struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the first step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same class interests, Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who agree with the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

### **What Next?**

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We have no leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political commitment and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. Joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political decision you will make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want a world without exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality you should seriously consider joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

**ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Woodside Park Road, London

## WAR! THE LOGISTICS OF INSANITY

Looking at the overwhelming assembly of aircraft-carriers, fighter planes, B 52 bombers, tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems (the most advanced in the world) and a quarter of a million military personnel, and the fact that Britain has over 200 tanks each with 58 depleted uranium shells on top of the 3,000 rockets America had ready for the opening onslaught - the resolve of American and British capitalism to control Iraq's oil resources becomes chillingly clear.

The fact that the widespread use of depleted uranium in 1991, created radiation hazards leading to a huge increase in cancer among children who were deliberately denied treatment by America and Britain blocking requests on the grounds of "*dual use*", adds a new dimension to talk of "*morally justified*" wars "*for peace, liberty*" and "*democracy*". It also exposes the sham of Bush's talk of "*liberating*" the Iraqi people from oppression.

Add to this deaths caused from diseases associated with the lack of clean drinking water and proper sanitation, for which treatment was also blocked by the US and the UK, whose bombs had destroyed essential infrastructure, and in the twelve years since 1991, half-a-million children have died. Blocking treatments, medicines and decontamination equipment accounts for some of those Security Council Vetoes America has used. (For more details, read the chapter: *Paying the Price*, in **The New Rulers of the World** by John Pilger.)

The destructive capability of the world's only superpower, together with that of its junior partner, exposes the blatant hypocrisy of their overplayed gramophone record about Iraq's so-called weapons of mass-destruction. In the week before Bush decided diplomacy was over, America tested another new bomb called the MOAB (Massive Ordnance Air Blast). This latest product of the self-appointed world's policeman is a 10 ton bomb and the people

of Florida were told the tests would be heard for miles.

When these are added to Napalm, Daisy-cutters and cluster-bombs, used in various combinations against Vietnam, Serbia and Afghanistan, and when the use of atom bombs against Japan is considered in conjunction with the Bush/Blair readiness to use "tactical" nuclear weapons if they choose, on top of depleted uranium, it becomes brutally obvious which capitalist country constituted the greater threat to the world, America or Iraq!

The element of cowardice can be seen in the world bully-boy mentality of America's overkill strategy. The firing of cruise missiles from submarines and, within two days of the starting of the war, America was dropping 10 ton MOAB bombs on Iraq.

In contrast, in the lead-up period, we were shown Iraq's "drone" aircraft, which was seized on as a threat to US/UK and world security. Channel 4 News detailed the fact that these craft had an engine smaller than that of a lawnmower and that they were held together with masking-tape. Not quite in the same league as the B52 bomber!

When the UN inspectors were ordered out of Iraq, while still looking for weapons and asking for more time (they left on 18 March), Nick Robinson, an ITV News journalist, said Bush and Blair "*have known this day was coming for a year*". This tends strongly to confirm that the "*inspections*" were a farce from the start. And Ken Clarke said some weeks before, the date had been "*pencilled in*" for a long time.

The build-up and deployment of the vast prerequisites of overkill, took some months. Bush and his war-lords kept an eye on increasing desert temperatures, and when General Franks said he was ready the countdown started. Even by the standards of capitalism's usual hypocrisy each new low was followed by another.



## The Ultimate Catch 22

Saddam Hussein was told "*let the inspectors in or we will bomb you*". For a potential belligerent to be forced to declare to its adversary what weapons he has surely breaks new ground.

Farce was added to hypocrisy when, whatever was declared was not believed, and when relatively puny rockets with a range of about 210 miles were destroyed it was dismissed as "*play-games*" by the Straw/Rumsfeld crowd.

To deny having weapons of mass destruction was condemned as "*lying*". To admit having them was to be "*in breach of UN Resolution 1441*" and was also "*grounds*" for war. Iraq's Vice President Ramadan condemned the UN for withdrawing the inspectors and helping the US attack.

In November 2002 Iraq submitted a 12,000 page dossier on its range of biological and chemical weapons. This dossier was for the UN inspectors to submit to the UN Security Council. Washington grabbed it before anyone else could see it. This prime piece of arrogance showed who was really calling the tune.

What America was so keen for the world not to know can only be guessed at, but subsequent reports suggested the names of about 150 companies in the US, UK and Europe which had supplied Iraq with chemical and biological weapons including anthrax were "*deleted*". It also became common knowledge that US Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, has personally been involved in anthrax deals with Iraq - the same man now demanding war against weapons of mass destruction!

About half way through the inspections farce, Hans Blix demanded more "*detailed intelligence*". We were led to believe that masses of evidence from

satellite surveillance and on-the-ground spying was held in dossiers by both British and American intelligence. When cornered into revealing "evidence" to the Security Council, Colin Powell solemnly read out details which turned out to be from a student's thesis from twelve years before, which had been lifted off the internet. Blair used the same "evidence" on the House of Commons. When exposed, they went on to the next likely story and it was soon forgotten.

That the whole weapons issue was a "distraction for the media" as John Pilger, among others, had claimed is made clear from the fact that with few exceptions for six months leading up to war, the entire media other than the Daily Mirror, depicted the whole situation in terms of "regime change", "getting rid of the threat from weapons of mass-destruction" and "liberating" Iraq. Oil, which was and remains the central issue, was hardly mentioned.

To the credit of many of those who demonstrated on 15 February, "No Blood for Oil" was frequently seen among their banners. Socialists do not share the view of the Stop the War Alliance, that war can be ended while capitalism remains. The piecemeal approach of opposing each war as it happens, while ignoring the class-structured world economy, the conflicts over markets, resources and strategically important areas, is to deal with effects and ignore the cause.

It is also clear from the movement of public opinion that, without Socialist understanding, workers can be swayed by appeals to nationalism and patriotism, and by the spiel of expediency-driven politicians. Historically, an example of this is provided by the so-called Communist Party. First they supported war "against fascism", until late in 1939 when their beloved Stalin made a pact with Hitler and then, they called the war "imperialist". (see their pamphlet: "Why this War?" When in June 1941 Hitler attacked Russia they again supported the war (see their pamphlet "How to win this war").

An example from today comes from CND, a key part of the Alliance. Neil Kingsworth said "*CND people protesting at war are just as much behind the troops as anyone else*". He denied that CND was unpatriotic (*Teletext*, 21 March 2003). The terrible potency of nationalism can be seen in the dualist attitude of CND, "*opposing*" the war while supporting the people who are waging war.

Today's Leftwingers, particularly those inside the Labour Party, were saying: "*No war on Iraq without UN support*". This is not a principled opposition to war. What would have happened to this "*opposition*" if a further UN resolution had gained support?

Blair's position was thought to look hopeless, having pinned his case on the UN and failing to get a second resolution. He brazened it out and, with Tory support, got a 263 Parliamentary majority. 217 having voted for the lost amendment, only 149 voted against the main motion. 68 "*rebels*" vanished between the first and the second vote. Only four of the forecast 26 government resignations materialised. Talk suddenly became almost as cheap as lives.

### **There was No Debate**

There was in fact no debate. There was a tame question and "*answer*" session which questioners were prevented from "*making a speech*" while Blair and Duncan Smith harangued for as long as they chose. Debate means arguing from both sides. No argument was allowed. The questions were all mild, coming from lifelong opportunist mediocrities showing no widened world view, but accepting the phoney pretences about weapons regime change. Any revolt was talked into the ground.

Life in shallow, emotional opinions, was as evident outside the commonsense as inside. People being swayed by superficial rhetoric. One survey showed 52% of people would vote with the government and 42% against; there were 6% who didn't know.

A life of patriotic brainwashing paid-off in America, with 71% support for President Bush. There was a constant presence of antiwar protesters outside the Commons and many young people left their schools to protest. On Saturday, 11 March millions of people world-wide protested (BBC figure News 24). One protester briefly interviewed outside the Commons said: *"People were allowed to forget Afghanistan by the Media"*. No body-count of those slaughtered or dying from starvation and exposure has come out of that particular oil-war.

### So, What Did Blair Say?

Blair talked of Saddam Hussein's *"non-compliance"* and being *"in breach"* of UN Resolution 1441. Everything he said on that score applies to Israel which, not just since last November or for twelve years but for 35 years, has been bombing, rocketing, shelling and bulldozing poor peoples homes in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The non-stop killing by Israel of men, women and children in order to annex their territory has gone on in defiance of UN Resolutions and with the support of Britain and America, with weapons supplied by them.

Israel's militarist expansionism has alienated much of the Arab world and massively contributed to the growth of terrorism, which America and Britain seek to contain by bombing. Blair ranted about the *"unreasonable"* French veto. Unable to answer a question about 35 British vetoes and 70 American, he said: *"Weakness in the face of a tyrant is the path to conflict"*. This was also not applied to tyrant Ariel Sharon. Neither does it explain how, by being strong, we have conflict anyway! Really, Blair was only backing away from his repeated commitment to a second UN Resolution before any war.

Fittingly, Clare Short sat at his elbow.



Blair linked terrorism and access to weapons of mass destruction. He said: *"There are countries and scientists prepared to sell nuclear information"*. He referred to the horrors that would follow the use of a *"dirty bomb"*. He did not say whether depleted uranium came within that category?

However, if the US and the UK had not chosen nuclear militarism sixty years ago, and harnessed science for that purpose, the situation might not be there. The impetus for Russia to go nuclear came from America. It is, in any case, the system of capitalism that creates the situation of confrontation and conflict. It is capitalism with its rivalries over the earth's resources that calls forth military force and engenders hatred, war and terror.

Blair made a point of saying that *"Europe is at peace"* to show the importance of standing up to a tyrant. He forgot the 11 weeks in 1999 and the bombing of Serbia, carried out by NATO, under his and Clinton's orders.

Blair was asked *"What prompted the al-Qaeda attack on America?"*. No answer. The 11 September had *"changed US psychology"*, he said. Who financed and armed the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the first place was left out of account, as was the intense bombing of Afghanistan following 11 September 2001 and any intimation of the intention to grab Afghanistan for oil reasons months before.

Blair was asked *"Who supplied Iraq?"*. No answer. The world's second largest oil reserves failed to gain a mention. Blair then detailed *"Saddam's pitiless terror and use of torture, the cutting out of tongues"* failing to mention that this is the same man the US and UK, among others, armed to wage war against Iran for eight years. Amnesty International would have told him that many countries, including Israel, are guilty of using torture. America's concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay is hardly a model of respect for human rights or the Geneva Convention.

A life of patriotic brainwashing paid-off in America, with 71% support for President Bush. There was a constant presence of antiwar protesters outside the Commons and many young people left their schools to protest. On Saturday, 11 March millions of people world-wide protested (BBC figure News 24). One protester briefly interviewed outside the Commons said: "People were allowed to forget Afghanistan by the Media". No body-count of those slaughtered or dying from starvation and exposure has come out of that particular oil-war.

### So, What Did Blair Say?

Blair talked of Saddam Hussein's "non-compliance" and being "in breach" of UN Resolution 1441. Everything he said on that score applies to Israel which, not just since last November or for twelve years but for 35 years, has been bombing, rocketing, shelling and bulldozing poor peoples homes in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The non-stop killing by Israel of men, women and children in order to annex their territory has gone on in defiance of UN Resolutions and with the support of Britain and America, with weapons supplied by them.

Israel's militarist expansionism has alienated much of the Arab world and massively contributed to the growth of terrorism, which America and Britain seek to contain by bombing. Blair ranted about the "unreasonable" French veto. Unable to answer a question about 35 British vetoes and 70 American, he said: "*Weakness in the face of a tyrant is the path to conflict*". This was also not applied to tyrant Ariel Sharon. Neither does it explain how, by being strong, we have conflict anyway! Really, Blair was only backing away from his repeated commitment to a second UN Resolution before any war.

Fittingly, Clare Short sat at his elbow.

Blair linked terrorism and access to weapons of mass destruction. He said: "*There are countries and scientists prepared to sell nuclear information*". He referred to the horrors that would follow the use of a "*dirty bomb*". He did not say whether depleted uranium came within that category?

However, if the US and the UK had not chosen nuclear militarism sixty years ago, and harnessed science for that purpose, the situation might not be there. The impetus for Russia to go nuclear came from America. It is, in any case, the system of capitalism that creates the situation of confrontation and conflict. It is capitalism with its rivalries over the earth's resources that calls forth military force and engenders hatred, war and terror.

Blair made a point of saying that "*Europe is at peace*" to show the importance of standing up to a tyrant. He forgot the 11 weeks in 1999 and the bombing of Serbia, carried out by NATO, under his and Clinton's orders.

Blair was asked "*What prompted the al-Qaeda attack on America?*". No answer. The 11 September had "*changed US psychology*", he said. Who financed and armed the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the first place was left out of account, as was the intense bombing of Afghanistan following 11 September 2001 and any intimation of the intention to grab Afghanistan for oil reasons months before.

Blair was asked "*Who supplied Iraq?*". No answer. The world's second largest oil reserves failed to gain a mention. Blair then detailed "*Saddam's pitiless horror and use of torture, the cutting out of tongues*" failing to mention that this was the same man the US and UK, among others, armed to wage war against Iraq for eight years. Amnesty International would have told him that many countries, including Israel, are guilty of using torture. America's concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay is hardly a model of respect for human rights or the Geneva Convention.



Saudi Arabia, which allowed its territory to be used by America in the 1991 war on Iraq, and is on very good oil relations with the US and UK, is subject to rigid rule by a despotic monarchy. On 19 January 2003 Channel Four News referred to an incident where a fire in a girls' school killed 15 girls who were not allowed to leave the building by the Religious Police because they were not wearing head covers. Decapitation and dismemberment are common forms of punishment, described as Koranic Rule. A month later the same new programme, referring to Saudi Arabia said torture is commonplace and added the comment *"nobody makes much of it - they all want the oil"*.

Nobody is in a better position to know all this than Mr Blair. Blair argued that: *"to back away now would encourage such regimes and tyrannies"*. He mouthed the empty plea for a *"viable Palestinian state"*, knowing that another tyrant, Sharon, rejects the idea. The BBC News at 10 (18 March 2003), which gave details to the *"count down"* in the course of commenting about pre-emptive strikes, asked: *"after the first test case, who will be next"?*

### **Bombs, Rockets and Hypocrisy**

Each rocket cost about \$1m, 64 were fired in one night and 300 bombs were also dropped. At the same time it was reported that the US had \$36m for *"humanitarian"* aid. When the accuracy of US bombs and missiles is repeatedly emphasised by their warlords, it should be remembered that on their own figure *"7% of bombs and rockets miss"*. When many hundreds are involved *"accuracy"* needs to be redefined. When bombs are so powerful that whole areas are destroyed the idea of hitting only military targets becomes a cynical lie.

They admitted that up to three rockets had landed in Iran. Two hit Turkey and one hit a passenger bus full of Syrians, near the Syrian border. Of this bus incident, a US spokesman insisted *"targeting is done very carefully"*. Those killed by *"friendly fire"* have to be added to this *"collateral damage"*.



To debate which people it is "*legitimate*" to kill is to accept the contempt that capitalism has for humanity. Workers are members of the same class world-wide. They have no interests for which to kill each other.

When, against expectations, American soldiers started to be captured, Rumsfeld was the first to demand they be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. This hypocrite changed the status of Taliban soldiers to "*unlawful combatants*" in order to evade the Geneva Convention.

Bush said any ill-treatment of these prisoners would be regarded as war crimes. This would invoke the International Criminal Court, which America does not recognise but might find convenient when it suits its interests.

### Conclusion

It is interesting to reflect on some of the lies from past war propaganda about the "*naturally warlike Germans*". They were against the war on Iraq saying "*that peaceful means had not been exhausted*". Of course, peaceful means could not apply because disarmament was not the issue, oil was. Then the Russians, who not long ago we were told were "*out for world domination*", refused to sanction the use of force.

It was the self-appointed champions of "*peace and freedom*", Britain and America, who were frantically seeking support for war.

Some people argue that if Hitler had been stopped sooner lives in WWII would have been saved. Blair encourages this view. It begs the question: how did Hitler arise if not from war and economic conflict? The process did not stop with Hitler, as they said it would, and it will not stop with Hussein.

Future wars are already being hinted at against North Korea, Iran and Syria. Killing some people as a pretext for saving others is a barbaric argument. Who was saved by the 500,000 Iraqi children sacrificed for sanctions? How many by the million killed in Indonesia or the 3 million in Vietnam? Capitalism killed them all and it will kill more.

Squeamishness about causing human misery and death has never interfered with the operations of capitalism. The world's only super power calls it "*the American Way*".

Capitalism does not present the world with a choice between tyranny and dictatorship or war with massive killing and destruction. There has always been both. The bombers and the tyrants are not all on opposite sides.

There will be no end to this recurring insanity until the majority of the world's workers see the futility of killing and dying for capitalism and establish Socialism, a classless world society of cooperation, conducive to human harmony and well-being.

### Arm-chair Generals

Throughout the war in Iraq one of the more nauseating spectacles was the large number of pro-war journalists who sanctimoniously cheered the aerial bombing, the launch of missiles and the dropping of cluster bombs from the safety of their arm-chair.

The leading cheerleader was not to be found at the **Daily Telegraph** but on the **Independent**: Johann Hari. He urged the bombing of Iraq even if it meant more than 100,000 men, women and children died. He claimed that was what the Iraqis wanted. They had told Mr Hari, when he was in Iraq, that they wanted their children to be killed by bombs and missiles so that when they were liberated they could adorn the rifle tops of coalition troops with flowers.

What he did not tell his readers was that he was only in Iraq as a tourist, met few Iraqis and found only one prepared to offer "coded support" (*Guardian*, 3 December 2002).

In short, his belief that thousands of Iraqis want to die "for liberation and democracy" was a tissue of lies. Who was it who said that the first casualty of war is the truth?

## NO INDEPENDENCE

The **Independent** is a particularly nasty newspaper. The bastard son of the **Daily Telegraph**, it celebrates capitalism but tries to be radical, liberal and trendy in everything else it writes about. Its **Weekend Supplement** is an obscene and gratuitous orgy of commodity consumption which only the rich can afford (recent articles plugged the new BMW 7 series, a snip at £57,000 and the guest list of "premier division" celebrities who were invited to one of Elton John's smart parties).

If the **Telegraph** appears to aim its sales pitch to retired generals in Tonbridge Wells, the **Independent** seems to chase the bank accounts of their sons and daughters in the Square Mile. The **Independent** is the newspaper that is pushed through the letter box of private apartments in Docklands to be read by traders before a day's work in the futures market or in commodities where the philosophy of life is summed up as "*I buy therefore I am*". Of all the newspapers, the **Independent** does not lose a moment to ridicule Marx, damn what it considers to be Socialism and to paint every third rate tin-pot dictator as a "*Marxist*".

Under the direction of Hamish McCrae, high priest of economic liberalism and the free market, the **Independent** drools on the images of Californian cuisine; a market Utopia in which the rich and idle rest their bronzed bodies while entertaining every fantasy money can buy. The future the **Independent** projects is the Los Angeles of Steve Martin's film **LA Story** "*This other Eden. Demi-Paradise. This precious stone set in a silver sea. This realm. This Los Angeles*". A playground for the rich where over the entrance is written "*No workers except on business. The poor strictly not welcome.*"

And the **Independent's** politics is capitalist to the core. Journalists form a line of Blair cheerleaders from one floor of 191 Marsh Street to the next. "*What is the alternative to capitalism?*" they sneer. "*Mises, Mises, Mises*" and "*Hayek,*



"Hayek, Hayek" is their corporate chant before they switch on their computers to produce another day's political bile against Marx's.

When a consultant to the capitalist class like Lord Bauer dies it is a full page obituary "*one of the most outstanding economists of the post-war period*" Basil Yamey wrote (**Independent**, 1 June 2002). Made a life peer by Margaret Thatcher, Bauer was the first recipient of the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty, established by the reactionary and anti-libertarian think-tank, the Cato Institute. His "*advancement of liberty*" was to preach, in such books as "**Dissent on Development** (1972), that the only solution to poverty was a market solution. His solution was similar to asking someone dying from poison to take more poison. Like all puffs for someone who was "*one of us*" the reality of the circles in which Bauer moved is hidden from view.

Take Thatcher, one of his benefactors, and Bauer's Monetarist chum, Milton Friedman. One thing Thatcher and Milton Friedman had in common was a love of the mass murderer and dictator, General Pinochet. In March 1999, when Thatcher visited the ex-dictator in Surrey where he was under arrest, she thanked him for bringing "*democracy*" to Chile. The facts were that Pinochet, far from being a freedom-loving democrat, was associated with a US-backed regime who indulged in torture, summary executions, mass murder, terror, rape, and overthrowing an elected government. To describe Pinochet as a defender of democracy is to turn the word on its head; to make black white and white black.

Milton Friedman was an economist whose thinking remained firmly back in the 19th century. When Keynesianism was demonstrated to be a failure, older doctrines were scraped out from the bottom of the economic dustbin of history and given a new name: Monetarism.



In his book "**Free to Choose**" Friedman stated that shopping was more satisfying than voting because, he believed, you pay for what you want in the supermarket while the person you vote for in an election might turn out to be completely different from what you intended. Laugh a minute. Funnier than the court jester at the Cato Institute, J O'Rourke, whose book "***Eat the Rich***" demonstrated that comedians might make us laugh but they can't make us swallow pro-capitalist propaganda without the audience throwing-up at its bad taste.

Friedman ignored the fact that for millions of people what they need from a supermarket but what they can actually afford to buy there are two different things. A sizeable proportion of the world's population they have no access to a supermarket. They have little or no money. 2 billion live on about \$2 a day (**World Bank 2000**). Only the rich are free to choose. And in 1977, as Friedman received his Nobel Prize for defending capitalism to the hilt, he became a consultant to the rich and powerful in Chile, particularly the vile and murderous General Pinochet.

Socialists hold no brief for President Allende, who preceded Pinochet. Unlike the capitalist Left we saw his government for what it was: capitalist, anti-working class, and destined to fail to run the profit system in the interests of all society.

Nevertheless, Pinochet was the figure-head of a military coup against a democratically elected, albeit capitalist, government, a coup which the CIA helped to organise (see C Hitchens **Kissinger on Trial**, 2002). Pinochet was responsible for killing over 10,000 people in his first year in power (**The Dictionary of Contemporary Politics in South America**, Routledge, 1989, p228). With dictators, either military or capitalist, economists know where they stand. Vile or murderous heads bowed and hands out for their thirty pieces of silver.

Incredible as it is, an educated section of the working class actually produce ideas and policy defending the interests for all or some of the capitalist class. Capitalists can't even think for themselves. They are dependent on paid wage slaves to do their thinking and advocacy for them.

In Chile, Friedman and his Chicago mob were able to give free play to their economic theories. Friedman stated that Pinochet *"has supported a fully free-market economy as a matter of principle. Chile is an economic miracle"*. Chile was the role model for Thatcher's policies from 1979 onwards.

The error of Friedman and his Chicago boys was to see economic problems as arising from the State rather than the market. True, the government policy is the cause of inflation but markets, as Marx showed, are unstable, irrational and prone to periodic crises. Capitalism is impervious to economic theory or government policy. Friedman's economics were going to fail and fail they did.

In 1982, after seven years of free market theory, Chile was hit by another economic crisis. Real wages fell sharply, falling in 1983 to 14% below what they had been in 1970 (see *"The Pinochet Regime"*, pp137-138, *Modern Latin America*, second edition, OUP, 1989). So much for Monetarism. Capitalism goes its own way from one economic crisis to the next.

The Cato Institute in Washington is a so-called *"think-tank"* linked to pro-capitalist interest groups like the tobacco industry, industrialists threatened by anti-environmental legislation and the pro-gun lobby. They describe themselves as libertarians but you will not see in their pamphlets and policy documents a case to end wage slavery or the tyranny of the labour market. When it comes to the liberty of workers from the labour market and the wages system there is silence.

The Cato Institute believes that any state interference in the economy is Socialist and every departure from state interference is a move towards a

capitalist free market Utopia. The Cato Institute was founded by the multi-millionaire, Charles Koch of Koch Industries, the richest privately-held company in the US. Koch has spent millions of dollars to found the Cato Institute, and gives secure, well-paid appointments for economic hacks some out of conviction and some willing to sell themselves to defend the interests of the capitalist class.

There are two types of prostitutes in Washington: one servicing the beds of politicians from the poor slums on the outskirts of the City and those economists and academics feeding the political minds from the smart think-tanks around the White House and the Senate. Lord Bauer was in the second category. Lord Bauer was one of the economists who drew up the Cato Institute's charter in 1977. For his defence of capitalism, Lord Bauer deserved his Milton Friedman award. But it had nothing to do with liberty.

Like the words "*democracy*" and "*equality*", "*liberty*" is a contested word. In university departments it is wrapped-up in mystical abstractions. Some defenders of capitalism like to think they are "*libertarians*" because they have abstractly separated the capitalist State from commodity production and exchange for profit. The capitalist State and markets are interdependent. One cannot exist without the other. This is as true of State capitalist countries as it is of mixed economies or ones with limited State regulation.

For Socialists, liberty or freedom is a class issue. While millions of men and women are forced onto the labour market to sell their labour power for a wage or salary there can be no freedom. For workers, freedom means freedom from capital and the wages system.

Is there a solution to poverty? Reading Bauer's book some thirty years later you can see why he was considered by Thatcher to be "*one of us*". He

provided arguments for sections of the capitalist class and their political agents to attack governments giving employers' unearned income away through taxation to developing capitalist countries. His arguments were a reminder that the role of governments is to look after the interests of the capitalist class and not the poor. Capitalists are not philanthropists. Why bale out another country when the game is to compete against and to destroy competitors? The issue for economists is not poverty, starvation and disease but the retention of social wealth plundered from the working class during the production process.

Bauer was never interested in finding a solution to poverty whether in developing or developed capitalist countries. Like the Cato Institute with whom he was associated, he never understood capitalist economics. He loved the abstract idea of the market but was completely unmoved and disinterested by its consequences. In life, he benefited from being a supporter of capitalism. A life of prostitution for the interests of another class. An obituary you would never read in the **Independent**.

#### Useful Idiots

Michael Gove, card-carrying Tory journalist attacked the antiwar protesters as "*useful idiots*" for criticising the government's recent dossier exposing Saddam's state terrorism within Iraq (**Times**, 2 December 2002). To this description he could have well added himself. No evidence of any dissent from Mr Gove can be found when his own party was in power supplying weapons of mass destruction to vile dictatorships across the globe. A very useful idiot to tyranny indeed.



## THE FORCES OF CONSERVATISM

Two words have been obliterated from the political language: "*revolutionary change*". Conservatives tell us that society cannot be changed. There is no alternative to the market, they say. Revolution (they warn) only brings with it totalitarianism, civil war, dictatorship, violence and concentration camps. Politicians conveniently forget that capitalism originated in revolution. Capitalism came into being out of the violent destruction of the preceding feudal order. It came into the world dripping from head to toe in blood.

Despite historical amnesia, critics of revolutionary change show Socialists that the history of the 20th century history is littered with the bodies of millions of people who met their death for political ideas and beliefs. Revolution to the popular and often ignorant mind is the barricade, the firing squad, the storming of the Winter Palace, the rhetoric of a leader from the podium, coups and counter revolution.

Revolution is seldom linked to the way in which people view the world and recognise that it can and must be changed. Revolution should be seen as a peaceful act of human agency through democratic means. So, you can be a revolutionary without apologising for the events of the last century.

The First World War, the concentration camps and the gulags had nothing to do with Socialism but everything to do with the anarchy of capitalist production and its economic and political instability. Socialism does mean revolution.

Socialists make no apology for the use of the word. The reason is simple. Within the pages of 20th century history there has never been a Socialist revolution. The only significant Socialist event was in 1904 with the establishment and its continued active, independent existence for nearly a century of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Ironically the last use of the word "revolution" within capitalist politics was under William Hague, the former Conservative leader. The Tories tried to launch "*the commonsense revolution*" in a desperate bid for votes, much as they are now by denying that they support capitalism (*Times*, 29 October 2002). But they were as comfortable with the word "revolution" as Blair was with "*Socialism*" when answering the repeated question "*Are you Socialist?*".

The Tories are no more revolutionary than Blair is a Socialist. The Tories and Labour have more in common than what divides them. All capitalist parties are united in the politics of reaction, the politics of preventing revolutionary change. They are the dark force of conservatism. They do not want to see capitalism abolished. They are comfortable about the market. They wine and dine the capitalist class. Revolutionary change is anathema to the parties of capitalism.

Politics, according to politicians, academics and journalists, can never be about fundamental change to society, to social relations and the means of production. To capitalist politicians politics is only about piecemeal reform. Political programmes which take society outside the comfort zone of the market are ridiculed, feared, belittled, and effectively marginalized.

That goods and services should be produced just for social need and nothing more is common sense. However, you need a revolution to achieve a rational social system. Without revolutionary politics, without conscious political action by a majority of Socialists, common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution will not happen.

We live in a deeply conservative age. Economic conservatism clings to the dogma of global capitalism and free trade as the only solution for the problems of disease, hunger and poverty. Social conservatism clings to prescriptions of conformity through "*duty*" and "*citizenship*". The economic doctrines of Hayek and Friedman on the one hand and the cloying moralising of Melanie

Philips and David Blunket on the other represent the dead hand of the past. Society has been here before. The victorious allies after Waterloo looked upon aristocratic Europe lasting forever. They did not look out on a perspective which would see them swept away a century later.

For those living at the turn of the 19th century there was a political darkness. Revolutionary politics was stamped upon. Dissent meant floggings, deportation and the gallows. Yet the revolutions of 1848 still happened and with it the publication of the **Communist Manifesto** and a conscious recognition of the working class with its own interest and Socialist objective. Nothing stands still. Change does occur. And that change can and must be revolutionary.

*"All fixed, fast-frozen relations", wrote Marx, "with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his conditions of life, and his relations with his kind".*

Politics is currently frozen like a cube of ice. All ice melts under heat. The heat of revolution will thaw and melt the solidity of conservatism in which reaction wears the dress of "modernisation", "progress" and "radicalism".

Politics is currently prejudiced towards the interest of capitalists, profit-making and the market. According to Peter Mandelson, Labour is "at ease" with vast ownership of wealth in the hands of a privileged minority. Politics is about what is and not what should be. Capitalists feel secure. They buy and exploit labour-power all over the globe. They set worker against worker. They force the working class to compete on the labour market and force workers to kill and die for illusory "motherlands" which represent nothing more than a giant accumulation of plunder.



The capitalist class wallows in unimaginable wealth and privilege to the exclusion of the rest of society. They wine and dine in an orgy of excess. Never has a ruling class owned so much and spent so much to the exclusion and poverty of everyone else. More people have died as a result of unnecessary famine and hunger than the entire population of concentration camps and gulags put together.

Where in the calendar is the Remembrance Day for the working class dead of the world? Do we see wreaths laid at monuments for the children killed each day in the sweat shops of the world as they make designer trash for their multinational employers? Who is asking the capitalist class to apologise for the millions of men and women killed at work through cost cutting, or who, in old age died of some cancerous disease they caught in employment? Never in human history has such a social system wasted, deformed and destroyed so many lives. And for what? Profit!

We are passing through a bleak conservatism similar to the early 19th century. Politics is no longer about human agency changing fundamental institutions. Social institutions - from governments to their policy think tanks - are about changing, manipulating and controlling people. Politics of change has been changed to a politics of management.

And those like Socialists who do pursue a politics of change are derided as Utopian idealists. Property ownership, buying and selling labour power, commodity production for exchange and profit cannot be challenged. Marx once sarcastically said that the Protestant church would surrender its 39 Articles of Faith to keep one acre of its property. Conservatism clings to what is and fears change of what we would become. Politics as an activity for change has been conflated with Utopianism. Capitalism, so we are told, is all we have got.

Once this conservatism has been admitted - and there are plenty of writers



taking this conservative line, from John Gray's **Straw Dogs** to Steven Pinker's **The Blank Slate** - a political corrosion sets in, a political torpor that expresses itself in petty resistance exemplified by the anti-capitalist movement, a mirror image of the political conservatism it wants to dislodge. Free-Trade and Protectionism are two sides of the same capitalist coin. Anarchism is a mirror image of conservatism. When the cry is "*everything must go*" the logical response is "*everything must stay*".

Socialists do not see a Socialist society as a blank sheet. We see it made up of real living men and women organising production and distribution democratically to meet human needs. Means of production, technology and the world's resources will be inherited from capitalism but used for a social purpose and not for one dictated by the profit motive. Social and co-operative labour, another development within capitalism, will be freed from the wages system to design and build a world fit for human beings.

And the force which will drive Socialist society on will not be the class struggle but the desire of a Socialist majority to make a social system work in the interests of everyone and not just the privileged few.

Against this reasonable proposition is the force of conservatism whether it comes from the Labour Party, the anti-capitalist anarchists or the capitalist Left. It is a hydra-headed monster. But like all monsters it has its weakness. And the weakness of this conservatism is the support the working class currently gives it.

### **Boom, Boom!**

The British Government had all the evidence they needed to show that Iraq had weapons of so-called mass destruction. They kept the receipts. Between 1973-91 the UK sold \$330 million worth of arms to Iraq (**Times**, 14 March 2003).

## THE LEFT - TRYING TO PUT CAPITALISM RIGHT!

Has the Left any function in life? Now that the Soviet Union has departed the scene the Left has lost its core function, that of Western cheerleaders for the heirs of Lenin and Stalin, trying to explain to the "ignorant masses" that what they really lacked was leadership in the form of a self-appointed elitist "vanguard" party.

In an article, **The Left has lost its way and lost its voice** (The Times, 17 August 2002, Camille Paglia wrote a typically confused diatribe against "Leftism", attacking it whilst at the same time regretting its weakness and uselessness. She wrote from an orthodox, neo-liberal, free market viewpoint, no doubt highly acceptable to the "Top People who read the Times".

She complained that, because the Left lacks "prestige and effectiveness" and is "programmatically anti-business", it "has been unable to reform the business practices that generate prosperity in the West". As she puts it:

*A strong articulate Left could have roused public resistance to the Marie Antoinette corporate culture of the past 15 years, which climaxed in recent revelations of monumental fraud ... An honest, respected Left would have been well positioned to render aid when and where it was needed.*

As she sees it, the Left's "proper status" is to serve "as a voice of ethical critique of materialistic modern society". Yet it is this same "materialistic" society, with its often deplorably corrupt business practices resulting in not only unethical but illegal and fraudulent practices, which C Paglia praised. Whilst the Left advocate "an authoritarian system" with a "concentration of power in the State", she counters with arguments in favour of the profit motive - without which she holds "few are inclined to work for long", - and "the play of the market" - which, she claims, works better for "long-term job creation" than the Leftists' panacea of "government engineering".

What arrant nonsense to suppose that, without prospects of profit, something in human nature prevents people doing anything by way of work. This is that hoary old chestnut, the stupidest and laziest argument ever put against Socialism. The voice from the back of the crowd at Hyde Park, or in the audience at a lecture or debate, with a superior, know-it-all tone of voice, asking: "*But what about the lazy people?*" or sometimes "*what about the greedy people?*" And even, a more educated version, asserting as a well-known fact that "*you can't change human nature*". It is an ignorant, stupid objection which shows the objector up as someone of profound ignorance, someone who has hardly given the matter a moment's thought.

Even under capitalism, which is dominated by the pressure of the profit motive, there is an enormous amount of work done, not for profit or even for pay, which is all that most of us get from the system, but simply because it needs to be done. For instance, most child care, especially in the early years, is unpaid. In emergencies, as in the disastrous floods in major cities of Central Europe and China, volunteers toiled long hours trying to build up protective sand-banks, work which was not done for profit or, in most cases, from self-interest.

The assumptions about "*human nature*" which lie behind the "*lazy/greedy people*" objections to Socialism are insulting in the extreme. They assume and expect the worst. Under capitalism people are expected and trained to be competitive and individualistic. But until relatively recently, human evolution has relied on social co-operation as the governing ethos, the norms of human society. The profit motive is far from intrinsic or basic to human nature.

What, then, of the "*play of the market*"? This is seen by Paglia and the *Times*' editors as being essentially beneficial, efficient, with just a few minor blemishes, easily put right. As she admits, she voted in 2000 for Ralph Nader for President.



Ralph Nader - the man who exposed the way capitalist businesses routinely produced cars and trucks that were seriously unsafe to drive, and who campaigned vigorously against Ford and General Motors to persuade them to spend money on safety. Remember that catchy slogan "*Unsafe at any speed*"? Remember Nader's Raiders?

The production of commodities for profit rather than products well-made, well-engineered, designed for use and not for built-in obsolescence - this commodity production for the market and to make profits, is a system which is bound to produce badly made vehicles, with engines that pollute the environment, and body work which crumples at 5 mph, offering little more protection to motorists and their passengers than a Coca Cola can would.

That is just one type of blemish for which "*the play of the market*" is responsible. That and the profit motive was what lay behind the corporate greed and malpractice which now has Wall Street and the Stock Exchange so worried. The sacred "*bottom line*" - that all-important, vital statistic which dictates: whether a plant should be enlarged or closed down; whether South Wales or South Korea should be major steel producers; whether textiles should be made in Manchester or Malaysia; in which countries and continents Ford and General Motors should set up car plants; whether American firms should move their manufacturing to Mexico and their IT centres to India - all of this (and early retirement too) is dictated by the "*bottom line*", by what accountants and number-crunchers say of a business's profits.

Now, however, that which was Gospel yesterday is today a "*horse of a very different colour*". Remember the Wizard of Oz, who turned out to be simply a devious, dishonest conman? Paglia, in her anger and distress over "*the Marie Antoinette corporate culture of the past 15 years [and] recent revelations of monumental fraud*", sounds very like Dorothy, the naive little girl from Kansas, when she discovered what a fraud that Wizard of Oz really was.



And, in a way, a capitalist entrepreneur is very like a wizard. He/she offers the investor a wonderful form of wizardry or magic. As an investment, you give them your savings, say £1,000, and they are supposed to pay you a dividend every few months. What's more, if you want to cash in your investment, it's really neat: selling your shares, bonds or whatever will mean you will (almost certainly - in small print) get back more than you put in to start with. That investment has actually grown, just like the grass on your back lawn, or the hair on your head.

Well, that is what is supposed to happen. And, when investing, how many of the *Times*' readers ever ask themselves just how is this trick pulled off? Just where does all this extra money come from? How is money made to grow?

Try talking to them of profits as being simply part of the surplus value created by labour - by the unpaid labour of the working class, to be more precise - and they look at you as if you were mad. No, no, they say: profits are the reward of thrift, the result of hard work, inventiveness or (the latest wheeze) "*intellectual property rights*".

That sort of explanation is, after all, much more "*ethical*" than facing up to the reality, the sordid and ruthless exploitation by or on behalf of a small class of useless "*rentiers*" living on the backs of the vast majority of the world's population who must toil for them in order to survive. This is not magic or wizardry at all, any more than the fraud behind the curtain was really the Wizard of Oz. In the real world, there is no magic but there are tricks.

We all know of the three shells trick and the card version, Hide the Lady. Such tricks are a matter of sleight of hand, a bit of palming, or a card up the sleeve. The surplus value trick works a bit like that: things are not what they seem to be.

We are told by economists, businessmen, politicians and the media that workers sell their "labour" for wages and salaries. The trade unions periodically demand "*a fair day's wage for a fair day's work*", and this supports that mistaken notion. But the reality is very different. Not that, by and large, employers are generally cheating us. But they are actually paying us, not for our "labour" - the production or processing of a certain number of widgets or whatever. What they pay us for is our "*labour power*", ie our ability to work; in short, for the temporary use of our physical and mental abilities. Just as with plant and machinery such as cranes, earth-movers and vans which are often leased or hired, rather than being bought outright, so too with the workforce. We, also, are hired or leased for a period of time. Our pay packets are calculated roughly on the basis of what it costs to keep us alive (plus more if we are skilled, and even more if our skills are in high demand, but less a bit since the government coughs up a little to support our children).

What "*surplus value*" boils down to is simply the difference between output, the value created by the workforce, that is, by our labour power applied to fixed or constant capital, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what employers actually pay out by way of wages and salaries. Some of this surplus is handed over to the government by way of taxes, some of it is paid out to banks and bondholders as interest on money lent to businesses and to shareholders as their share in the business's profits, and part is ploughed back into the business to invest in Research and Development, to enable it to expand, to modernise its machinery, and so on.

So this is the reality behind what Paglia refers to, briefly, as "*the business practices that generate prosperity*". The profits of the few are derived from the exploitation, the unpaid labour, of the many.

Paglia seems to be unaware that her argument is inconsistent, riddled with contradictions. She favours and defends the profit motive and the play of the

market, but she objects to the inevitable consequences, amounting to "monumental fraud". She complains that the Left are weak and lack influence, yet, as she shows and as we know, the Left are a real nasty lot, dedicated to "authoritarian systems" with a "tyrannical master class". Would she welcome such Leftism becoming powerful?

Clearly not. For her, the desired and "proper status" of the Left is to serve as capitalism's conscience - a "voice of ethical critique of materialistic modern society", and if respected (when was the Left ever honest?!), able to "render aid when and where it was needed".

It was George Soros, a well-known - even notorious - currency speculator, who declared that capitalism is "amoral" - not an ethical, moral system but not immoral either, just simply lacking any morality whatever. That being so, the ethical role Paglia outlines for the Left - a part many of them are only too keen to play, with their ethical objections against war, protests against poverty, etc - such an ethical role is utterly irrelevant.

Capitalism operates and is reformed, or not, along lines which reflect the economic interests of powerful sections of the world capitalist class. Global finance institutions, transnational corporations, vast oil companies - these are some of the organisations which are currently dominant in international geopolitics. All the ethical objections and popular protests in the world weigh like a mere feather in the balance when weighed against these powerful economic interests.

The Left, then, whether using the dogmatic rhetoric of latter-day Leninism and Trotskyism, as Paglia sees it, or whether of the modern variety, focusing on "Third World" issues and the environment, with George Monbiot and Susan George in the van, is utterly irrelevant to capitalism. To put an end to the problems caused by capitalism, it will be necessary to put an end to the capitalist system itself, not merely to try to reform it.



In order to end poverty, to "*generate prosperity*" for all and not just for a few, we need to get rid of the class division in society, to end production for profit, commodity production with built-in obsolescence, this whole warped productive system with its wastefulness of the world's resources and of human potential. This is a matter of economic and social concern for all the world's workers. As a class, we know that this system can only work against our interests, not in our interests.

So our argument as Socialists is not a mere "*ethical critique*" of capitalism, a mere protest against its innumerable failings. No, ours is an attack against the whole system of class exploitation. The Socialist has only one demand, the revolutionary demand for an end to all exploitation and the building of a democratic world of social co-operation, based on common ownership of the world's resources. Roll on the day!

### **Frankenstein arms his monster**

(sales of weapons (to) Iraq 1973-91)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Arms export</b>
US	\$5m
UK	\$330m
Germany	\$995m
China	\$5,500m
France	\$9,240m
Russia	\$31,800m

Source **Times** February 2003



## Book Review:

### BUYER, BEWARE!

A book with a promising title, *Classical Marxism - Socialist Theory and the Second International* by David Renton (New Clarion Press, 2002), proved to be yet another Left-wing disappointment. This is a curate's egg of a book - good in very few parts, deceptive in many. It cannot be recommended for historical accuracy, honesty, depth or theoretical soundness. All these qualities it lacks.

This book is useless even for basic information about the Second International. Renton states simply that "*A Second International was established in 1889*" (p10). But who was involved? Which parties helped establish it? On what basis was it formed? How was it organised? On all these points he is silent.

Renton also carefully avoids having to explain the reformism at the heart of the International, dominated as it was by the German SPD whose Erfurt Programme was the basis for all social democratic parties of the period. As the SPGB commented in our 1948 pamphlet, *The Communist Manifesto and the Last Hundred Years*:

*An examination of (the Erfurt) programme will reveal the disappearance of all pretence to revolutionary action and an understanding of why the Social Democratic Party lost their way in the bog of reform. After analysing correctly the trend of existing society ... the analysis concludes with the statement that the Social Democratic Party "struggles in the present society, not only against exploitation and oppression of the wage-workers, but against every kind of exploitation and oppression, whether directed against class, party, sex or race" [our emphasis]. This lines the party up with every group that is out for some tin pot reform, sopping up the water in an overflowing bath instead of turning off the tap*

*Thus the programme, which became a model to be copied by other parties, though excellent in earlier parts, contained the fatal flaw that was destroying the working-class movement for Socialism. Reforms had always blunted the theoretical weapon, and continued to do so until genuinely socialist conceptions became submerged in a welter of reform; instead of being just steps on the way to the achievement of Socialism, as some of the theorists in the Social Democratic Party thought, the achievement of reforms became ends in themselves, transforming and drowning the end until Socialism became identified with State Capitalism. Hence the progress that the Social Democratic parties made, instead of bringing the achievement of Socialism nearer, simply organised Capitalism more effectively in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.*

Renton contrives to mention, with reference to Marxism and the Second International, only four organisations in Britain: the SDF, the Socialist League, the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party. The last three he discusses in his chapter on Tom Maguire, a strike activist who flitted rapidly between organisations, joining at various times before his early death in 1895, the SDF, the League, the Fabian Society and the ILP. Maguire's "socialism" was summed up in a letter with characteristic confusion:

*People call themselves socialists but what they really are is just ordinary men with socialist opinions hung round, they haven't got it inside them ... we get mixed up in disputes among ourselves or about one thing or another, and we can't keep a straight line for the great thing, even if we all of us know what that is (p69).*

At no point does Renton mention the SPGB, and by this omission he deceives his readers. To discuss Marxist positions on the war in 1914 - eg Rosa Luxemburg's opposition (**The Junius Pamphlet**, 1915) - without noting the SPGB's consistent opposition on grounds of class principle is dishonest.

In his chapter on Rosa Luxemburg, he fails to explain why, as an opponent of the SPD's policy of supporting the war, she still recommended "*that socialists should remain within the SPD ... [and] fight against its bureaucratization*" (p104). Revealingly, he has problems with her forthright condemnation of the dictatorial aspects of Bolshevik rule, trying to play it down as merely "*her suggestion that the Bolsheviks were wrong to disband the Constituent Assembly in November 1917*" (p110). He gives the standard to Bolshevik answer: the Soviets were more representative. Yet, of the 40m votes cast for the Constituent Assembly, only 24% were for the Bolshevik Party. In the Soviets the Bolsheviks had rather more support - about half the delegates at the second Congress of Soviets (November 1917). Such statistics are not cited by Renton - they would contradict his argument.

He utterly fails to answer the argument that, after seizing power as a minority which lacked majority support, Lenin and his associates could only hold onto power by force, ie as a dictatorship. While Renton concedes "*the failure of the Bolsheviks to maintain soviet democracy through the bitter years of the civil war, and likewise their failure to re-establish such democracy among the decimated ranks of the post-civil war Russian working class*" (p111), he does not offer any explanation for this failure. What's more, just for the record, the civil war period ran from 1919-1920 but, long before this, the Bolsheviks had re-introduced press censorship, arrested opponents, set up the Cheka with unlimited powers and, in spring 1918, dissolved 19 Soviets out of 20. That old excuse - the civil war and foreign intervention - just does not fit the facts.

Renton's admiration for that "*genius*", Lenin, leads him to mount the usual superficial and dishonest defence of vanguardism (v *What is to be Done?*). He asserts that: "*the means to make sure that the Russian party was not diluted by opportunism was democratic centralism*" (p137). Not true: a democratic party based on clear Socialist principles will not become reformist, so long as it remains a party of principle. But, almost in the next breath, Renton praises Lenin for abandoning this, vanguardist/elitist, organising principle: "*When the*

*masses were moving spontaneously towards socialism - in 1905-7 and again in 1914 - Lenin argued that the gates of the party should be opened to all who wanted to join" (p138).*

Clearly this opportunist, open-door principle is the very opposite of Lenin's idea of a party dominated by so-called "*professional revolutionaries*", able to lead the ignorant masses. Hero-worship can go no further: to the Rentons of this world whatever Lenin did was right.

The mixed-up nature of post-1917, Leftist '*Marxisms*' is summed up in Renton's assessment of the Russian revolution:

*Marx's vision of socialism had nothing in common with the regimes that were created in Russia, China and the other so-called Marxist states [true]. The Russian revolution began as a genuine popular insurrection, but quickly degenerated under the conditions of war, civil war and foreign invasion [false] (p5).*

This last point is typical of writers in the Trotskyist tradition who invariably make excuses for the Lenin-Trotsky policies (eg the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the setting up of the Cheka, the Kronstadt massacre, etc) but on the same page attack Stalin for following the same policy.

Renton's dreadful little book has space for Bernstein's gradualism, for IWW activism and anarcho-syndicalism, and Lenin's vanguardism. But he has not a word to say of the democratic, Marxist working class party which held to Marx's insistence on democratic self-organisation of the working-class for Socialism, and which, unlike the parties of the Second International, firmly rejected reformism and opposed the war, courageously and consistently, from start to finish, on grounds of class principle.



Of the SPGB's existence, its principled rejection of the Second International's reformism, its opposition to the war - not a word! We suppose Renton got well paid for his propaganda, which is what this is.

### **The SPGB and the Second International**

Immediately after its formation the Party sent delegates to the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress that was being held in Amsterdam in 1904, but the delegates found that the International was composed of delegations with a variety of non-Socialist views, and that the emphasis of the Congress was upon futile reform measures; they further found that, in spite of their protests, their position at the Congress was reduced to that of passive allies of the English reform parties in discussion and action. The report the delegates brought back decided the Party to withdraw from the International until the basis of delegation to the latter was such that only genuine Socialist parties would be admitted. ... The outbreak of war in 1914 exposed to the world the weakness of the Social Democratic parties, whose alleged Socialist aspirations were lost in the discussions, on each belligerent side, as to whether the war was offensive or defensive ... While the professed Socialist parties of Europe were falling to pieces and revealing the frailty of their claims to represent the real interests of the workers there was one party that took its stand on the principles of Socialism, and on that ground declared its opposition to the war as a purely capitalist conflict. This party was the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Immediately the war broke out its Executive Committee passed a resolution declaring that anyone who supported the war was unfit for membership of a Socialist party; in the September issue of the **Socialist Standard** the party published [its] Manifesto on the War:

## Book Review:

### MENSHEVISM VINDICATED?

On the Left there are still many followers of Lenin, a few even of Stalin, and numerous sects of Trotskyists. The latter mostly detest Stalin but praise Lenin. All claim to be Marxists. And the SPGB opposes them all.

So it is quite refreshing to come across this book, **The Seeds of Evil - Lenin and the Origins of Bolshevik Elitism** by Robin Blick (Steyne Publications, 1995). Blick holds as we do that: *"what Leninism still sees as a victory has proved to be a catastrophe for Marxism in particular, and the cause of socialism in general"* (p.ix).

He argues that the roots of Lenin's - and Bakunin's - system of vanguardist and elitist organisation were in *"Jacobin and Blanquist-inspired Russian populism"* (p23), citing especially Tkachov whose influence Lenin openly acknowledged.

Blick has done his homework well, not least in his emphatic demonstration that Marx and Engels would have opposed Lenin's idea of a directing elite. For instance, he notes that in the 1888 edition of the **Communist Manifesto**, Engels altered the text so as to make even more clear and explicit its rejection of elitism/vanguardism.

*"The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority"* [our emphasis].

The expression *"self-conscious"* was not in the 1848 edition but was inserted by Engels. Likewise, in a passage dealing with the early Utopians, Engels inserted the word *"spontaneous"* so as to make it read:

*"Social action is to yield to their [the Utopians'] personal inventive actions, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat to an organisation of society specially contrived by these inventors" [our emphasis] (Blick, pp37 and 18).*

Blick does not pull his punches in attacking the myth that Trotsky was somehow a good guy, quoting Trotsky, for instance:

*We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of the party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party ...*

*If there is one question which basically not only does not require revision but does not even admit the thought of revision, it is the question of the dictatorship of the party ...*

*We are the only party in the country, and in the period of the dictatorship it could not be otherwise ... the Communist Party is obliged ... to monopolise political life (p44).*

This book has much in it that is useful and of historical interest. Blick shows how Bolshevism influenced Mussolini, the Spanish Fascists and the Nazis. He gives useful statistics indicating both the lack of political support for the Bolsheviks in the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the Congress of Soviets (November 1917), and the economic backwardness of Russia, at the time of and after the Revolution. Blick asks many of the right questions, eg *"How ripe was Russia in 1917 for a socialist revolution?"* (p71) and *"In what sense, if any, was Lenin a Marxist at all?"* (p60).

However, in praising the Mensheviks especially his hero, Martov, for his "vision of a society that was both collectivist and democratic" (p5), Blick omits to mention the fact that as members of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) they were affiliated to the Second International. This was dominated by reformist organisations, particularly the German SDP with its largely reformist Erfurt Programme, and consequently it pursued an increasingly reformist, non-revolutionary, agenda.

He cites Axelrod's opposition to Lenin's faction as "*a conspiratorial mixture of anarchist and Blanquist tendencies, dressed up in the terminology of Marxism or Social Democracy*" (p98) and describes the later attempts of Axelrod and Martov to persuade "*western socialists*" that "*Bolshevism was nothing but a savage and pernicious throwback to Bakuninism, Nechayevism and Blanquism*" (p99). Blick is clearly referring to the western social democratic parties of the Second International, not to the SPGB which was well aware, early on, that Lenin's coup, since it lacked majority support, must result in dictatorship.

In his admiration for Martov and the Mensheviks, Blick is blind to their failings. For the record, in 1904 (a year after the '*split*' between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the RSDLP), the SPGB sent delegates to the Amsterdam Congress of the International but found that the International was dominated by reformist organisations, rather than working for Socialism and only for Socialism. Consequently, the Socialist Party decided to have nothing more to do with the International, unless and until it had become a revolutionary organisation. There is no evidence that the Mensheviks ever took such a stand or even tried to.

Ten years later, with the onset of war, the parties of the Second International failed the working class by abandoning the principle of class internationalism and supporting the war. The SPGB was alone in its consistent stand against



the war. Lenin, for instance, by drawing a distinction between a so-called 'just' war, as against wars of imperial conquest, contrived to be both against the war and, in some circumstances, for it - hedging his bets.

On organisation, Martov is quoted by the admiring Blick:

*"... [Martov] advocates "combating the revival of Utopian socialism, Jacobinical and anarcho-communist tendencies" in the name and spirit of revolutionary Marxism, with the object of leading the proletariat onward from Bolshevism towards true socialism" (p99).*

But as Blick points out himself, the working class, which Marx saw as a revolutionary class, is capable of its own self-emancipation. As the SPGB has been arguing for nearly a century, only sheep need leaders - class-conscious workers have no need for self-appointed great men, vanguard parties or leaders to show them the way.

Since Robin Blick lectures in Politics and History at a London college, specialising in *"contemporary political issues"*, it is odd that he makes no mention of the SPGB's sustained criticism of the claims and methods of Bolshevism. For instance, long before Mr Blick, the SPGB was pointing out the difference between Marxism and Leninism, and noting the similarity between what we referred to as Red Fascism and (Black) Fascism.

We do not endorse Blick's *"special tribute"* (p.x) to Martov, and we wish he had researched our Marxian analysis of Lenin-Trotsky-Stalinism in the columns of the **Socialist Standard** from 1917 on, some of these articles being collated in the Party's pamphlet, **Russia since 1917**. But he has made good use of the many, primary historical records now available, for instance quoting Lenin, Bukharin, Stalin and Trotsky, all singing from the same hymn book about the need for a *"factual concentration of power in the hands of a single person"* (in Trotsky's words, p100), and commenting:

*"So the reader is left asking: ... if this indeed be Marxism, why did its founders insist that to emancipate themselves, the working classes had, in their 'immense majority', to win 'the battle of democracy'? How can Caesarism ... call it proletarian if you will ... be reconciled with the Communist Manifesto's definition of working class rule as 'the proletariat organised as the ruling class'? (p100).*

This book is forthright in its attacking analysis of the pseudo-Marxism which has been a plague to Marxian Socialists 1917 onwards, the Leninism which *"constitutes a monumental and tragic hoax perpetrated on countless millions of oppressed and exploited human beings, not only in Russia, but throughout the world"* (p4). This book is well-researched, written from a Marxian perspective and is worth reading. That said, we wish Mr Blick had been able to rid himself of his admiration for Mantou and the Mensheviks. Also that he had been more thorough in his researches so as to be able to cite the SPGB's Marxian criticism of Leninism and its consequences.

### **Business Gurus**

Hundreds of business leaders recently attended a £900 per head conference for tips on corporate strategy from Gary Hamel, a management guru from the *Us* (*Independent*, 28 March 2002). He has his fans. *"The world's reigning strategy guru"*, gushed the *Economist*.

Mr Hamel is visiting professor at the London Business School. He has recently published a book *"Leading the Revolution"*. He is no Leninist.

What makes interesting reading is his CV. For many years he was advisor to the disgraced American multinational Enron.

In his book, Hamel praised Enron for being a *"genius for innovation"* and having a *"radical new business model"*, with *"fluid organisational boundaries"* and *"an incredible track record of creating bold new businesses"*.

Enron went on to become the largest corporate bankruptcy in history. Many of its directors and senior managers were indicted for fraud. And it brought down Anderson, the multinational accountancy and management consultancy whose employees were either students of Mr Hamel or had lapped up the rubbish in his publications. Be careful of gurus. From Waco to Enron the path taken by gurus and their followers is predictable destruction.

## LETTERS

Hi

I am an anarchist who is sympathetic with the ideas of your party. My main concern is the role of socialism through parliament. I have often heard the use of this quote by Marx

*"If in England or in the United States the working class wins the majority in Parliament or Congress, it could then use legal means to abolish the laws and institutions obstructing it's development".*

But would the ruling class, maybe more so in the USA not throw everything in the way that they could to stop this? I mean, I've seen how far the CIA are prepared to go to protect the ruling class, and on a lesser scale the FBI.

I suppose my main questions to you are

Is a Parliamentary revolution possible in your opinion, and if so how do you see us getting round the obstacle of bourgeois 'law'.

Is a parliamentary revolution essential? And why should we limit ourselves to working 'within the law'. If we limit ourselves to working within the law can the ruling class not place more laws in our path again and again?

One quote that sticks in my mind is *"Those who suppress freedom always do so in the name of law and order"*, John V Lindsay.

Thanks, and I hope you can clear up my questions/confusion.

Comradely MC



## Reply to anarchist - Mutton Dagger

Your question raises the vitally important question of how the working class can act to abolish the wages system, the world-wide capitalist system of production for profit, and establish Socialism, a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

We argue that the class struggle has to be fought and won on the political field. Against this, it is often argued by anarchists/libertarians, syndicalists, De Leonists and others that the "*ruling class*" would use their hold on political power and the armed forces of the state to crush the Socialist movement. If that were true, we would be stuck with capitalism forever. After all, the methods that they advocate - such as armed insurrection, general strikes and other forms of direct action, including terrorism - are all useless when confronted with the power of the state. History is littered with examples of state force being used to crush workers' movements and struggles.

This is not surprising since we all know that the state's core, primary function is to protect and defend the interests of the capitalist class, the interests of the exploiters against the exploited, of the haves against the have-nots. So each and every time these interests are thought to be threatened, the forces of the state will be mobilised by governments made up of politicians dedicated to running capitalism, not in the interests of the vast majority - the working class, but in the interests of the minority - the capitalist class.

That is why the SPGB and our fellow Socialists in other countries argue for the necessity of political organisation. Our argument rests on the following points:

The urgent need for the working class to become class-conscious - a class in and for itself, in Marx's phrase - and to organise itself, democratically and politically for Socialism;



That a Socialist working class should use their votes, not as you put it for a "*parliamentary revolution*" but rather for a revolutionary use of parliament. The real power of such votes depends on the class-consciousness and determination of the workers, just as at present the weakness of our votes is a measure of the reformist, nationalist and even racist delusions prevalent among the workers, assiduously fostered by the mass media and capitalist political parties with their plans for reforming capitalism, waging war, getting water to run uphill and so on. That this self-organisation of the working class as a political party has to be organised consciously and democratically, without the burden of any leadership or self-appointed, elitist '*vanguard*', in order to take control of the institutions of the state, including especially the armed forces, the police and other coercive institutions.

As stated above, political organisation for Socialism is necessary since it has been shown again and again that, unless the workers gain control of Parliament, the state's armed forces would inevitably be used to defend the class interests of the capitalists. If not by force with bullets and CS gas, then the legal system can be used - the police, the judiciary and the jails. Laws are after all passed by Parliament - by the '*representatives*' elected mostly by the workers.

What we argue is that class-conscious workers should use their votes to elect to Parliament, not '*representatives*' who act as if they have a free hand in deciding what policies to support or oppose, and normally disregard the views and interests of the workers who put them there, but delegates with only one mandate - to expropriate the capitalist class and help establish Socialism.

We know that Parliament in Britain, and similar institutions in other countries, have a firm grip on the armed forces, the police, etc. But, paradoxically, it is members of the working class who run and staff all the governmental institutions, from the bureaucracies of Whitehall to the barracks of Aldershot,

at all levels. All these key personnel, on whom the capitalist system relies so heavily, are like the rest of us, part of the world working class.

At all times, the smooth and orderly running of capitalism depends on state employees, so-called public servants. The state has been described as "*the executive committee*" of the capitalists. They need it as an institutional medium through which they can settle their never-ending disputes, arising from their inevitable conflicts of interests. Faced with a class-conscious, democratically organised, Socialist working class determined to act effectively to end the class system, would they be in a position to suspend Parliament?

If they did, in such circumstances it would be an act of supreme and suicidal folly - utterly counterproductive, handicapping whatever efforts they might want to make to resist the Socialist movement, at a time and in a way that would be most disadvantageous to them. For them to have a hope of countering a strong Socialist political organisation, they would need to have at their disposal the institutions of the state. Without Parliament they would lack the political power they most needed, while even their economic power and unity as a class would rapidly fall apart. Once the state's co-ordinating role had gone, competitive disputes and conflicts of interest between rival sections of the capitalist class would escalate out of control and increasingly impossible to resolve.

Our argument is one that recognises the central and pivotal role played by the institutions of the state, both in ensuring that capitalism's numerous conflicts of interest do not result in a shambolic chaos, and most significantly in defending the interests of the capitalist class against the working class. To ignore this by resorting to forms of direct action is to act blindly, without thought for the consequences or taking account of the lessons from history. When the chips are down, as Marx and Engels argued "*every class struggle is a political struggle*".

## LITERATURE STALLS

We shall have our literature stalls at the following venues during the Summer months with a full range of our pamphlets etc. We are always happy to discuss with you any points related to our case.

SUNDAY 20 JULY 2003,  
TOLPUDDLE MARTYR FESTIVAL,  
TOLPUDDLE, DORSET.

SUNDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2003,  
BURSTON SCHOOL STRIKE FESTIVAL,  
BURSTON, Nr. DISS, NORFOLK.

## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at  
51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins. Kings Cross Tube Station).  
All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

### **Socialism on the Web**

The Socialist Party of Great Britain now has its own web site at  
[www.spgb.org.uk](http://www.spgb.org.uk)

The e-mail address for the party is: [enquiries@spgb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@spgb.org.uk)

## AUDIO TAPES

For those who are unable to attend our lectures, we can offer the following audio tapes, that cover fundamental aspects of the SPGB case and current topics. Some tapes include parts of the Question and Discussion periods.

Price £2.50 each, inc. postage. Please order by reference number and make your cheque payable to Socialist Studies.

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| 101. | Trade and Capitalism Wars.<br>The Socialist Alternative.   | E. Hardy   |
| 102. | Nationalisation and Privatisation.   | E. Hardy. (1986).                                    |
| 103. | Profits, Riches and Poverty, and<br>Prices, Wages & Unemployment   | E. Hardy. (1986).                                    |
| 104. | Mrs. Thatcher's Popular Capitalism.  | E. Hardy.  |
| 105. | Capitalism - Utopian & Scientific  | R. Lloyd. (2002).                                    |
| 106. | Is Human Nature a barrier to Socialism.  | P. Young. (2002).                                    |
| 107. | Socialist Ideas 1900 - 2000.   | T. D'Arcy<br>& D Davies. (2002)                      |
| 108. | The Futility of Reformism.   | P. George and<br>C. May. (2002).                     |
| 109. | Marxian Economics (2 lectures).<br>Wage Labour & Capital.<br>Value, Price & Profit.  | E. Hardy. (1962)                                     |
| 110. | How we live and how we might live.   | C. Skelton. (2002)                                   |
| 111. | Defining Terrorism.  | H. Baldwin. (2002).                                  |
| 112. | Capitalism, Racism & Politics.   | R. Lloyd.  |
| 113. | SUMMER SCHOOL 2000.<br>Where is Capitalism going ? (2 tapes)   | R. Lloyd.<br>T. D'Arcy<br>H. Baldwin.<br>C. Skelton. |
| 114. | Socialist Opposition to War.   | C. May.  |
| 115. | Lenin and the Vanguardists.  | C. Skelton.  |
| 116. | DEBATE. Can a Socialist be a Christian ?<br>For the Christian Socialist Movement.<br>For The Socialist Party of Great Britain. | A. Bradstock.<br>H. Baldwin.                         |



# THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

## OBJECT

*The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.*

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...

The Socialist Party of Great Britain,

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

email: [enquiries@spgb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@spgb.org.uk)

[www.spgb.org.uk](http://www.spgb.org.uk)

## LITERATURE AVAILABLE

ALL PRICES ARE  
INCLUSIVE OF  
POSTAGE

**Socialist Studies** - our official journal  
Issues Nos: 1 - 48 @ 50p each

**Socialist Principles Explained**  
The Object and Declaration of Principles  
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

**Banking & Credit Myths**

**A Socialist View** 60p

**Socialist's Handbook** £1

**Four "Questions of the Day" pamphlets:** - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

**The Materialist Conception of History** Price £1

Our pamphlet looks at the theory of the MCH  
and relates it to 20th Century Capitalism.

**War and Capitalism** Price £1

Updated reprint including reference to recent conflicts.

**Women and Socialism** Price 80p

Sixth reprint includes "Whatever happened to Feminism?"

**Marxism in the 21st Century** Price £1

A new pamphlet covering essential aspects of Marxian economics.

**The Communist Manifesto in the 21st Century** Price 80p

**Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 1.** Price £1

**Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 2.** Price £1

**Why Capitalism will not collapse** Price 80p

**Trade Unions - Partnership or Confrontation ?** Price 80p

**New Labour - A Party of Capitalism** Price £1

**Capitalism Causes War and Terrorism** Price £1

**Socialist Policies & Principles - Setting the record straight** £1

## LITERATURE - SPECIAL OFFER

For an in-depth study of the case of  
The Socialist Party of Great Britain  
we have 3 special offers.

A full set of our Socialist Studies journals (nos. 1-48) for £10.00.

A set of our pamphlets listed above (19 in all) for £13.00

Or all the above listed journals and pamphlets for only £18.00.

## ORDERS TO OUR HEAD OFFICE.

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB  
(Please make cheques payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES).

- Postage stamps acceptable for individual items -